

**ENFIELD TOWN COUNCIL
MINUTES OF A SPECIAL MEETING
MONDAY, JANUARY 20, 2015**

A Special Meeting of the Enfield Town Council was called to order by Chairman Kaupin in the Enfield Room of the Enfield Town Hall, 820 Enfield Street, Enfield, Connecticut on Monday, January 20, 2015. The meeting was called to order at 5:30 p.m.

ROLL-CALL – Present were Councilors Arnone, Bosco, Cekala, Deni, Edgar, Hall, Kaupin, Mangini, Stokes and Szewczak. Councilor Lee was absent. Also present were Town Manager, Matthew Coppler; Town Attorney, Kevin Deneen; Assistant Town Manager, Derrik Kennedy; Assistant Town Manager of Development Services, Courtney Hendricson; Town Clerk, Suzanne Olechnicki

MOTION #3005 by Councilor Mangini, seconded by Councilor Stokes to go into Executive Session to discuss Personnel Matters, Pending or Threatened Litigation and Real Estate Negotiations.

Upon a **SHOW-OF-HANDS** vote being taken, the Chair declared **MOTION #3005** adopted 10-0-0. The meeting stood recessed at 5:32 p.m.

EXECUTIVE SESSION

The Executive Session of the Enfield Town Council was called to order by Chairman Kaupin at 5:33 p.m.

ROLL-CALL – Present were Councilors Arnone, Bosco, Cekala, Deni, Edgar, Hall, Kaupin, Mangini, Stokes and Szewczak. Councilor Lee was absent. Also present were Town Manager, Matthew Coppler; Town Attorney, Kevin Deneen; Assistant Town Manager, Derrik Kennedy; Assistant Town Manager of Development Services, Courtney Hendricson; Town Clerk, Suzanne Olechnicki. Councilor Bosco excused himself from the meeting at 5:40 p.m. and returned at 5:48 p.m.

Personnel Matters, Pending or Threatened Litigation and Real Estate Negotiations were discussed with no action or votes being taken.

Chairman Kaupin adjourned the Executive Session at 6:52 p.m. He reconvened the Special Meeting at 6:54 p.m. and stated during Executive Session, Personnel Matters, Pending or Threatened Litigation and Real Estate Negotiations were discussed with no action or votes being taken.

THOMPSONVILLE PRESENTATION

Ms. Hendricson stated last year Thompsonville was considered a key initiative to Enfield's economic development. She noted Thompsonville was singled out because it needed the most help in re-energizing the residents, attracting private investment dollars

and sprucing up the location to create economic vitality and vibrancy. She stated a targeted effort in Thompsonville has been underway which benefits the entire Enfield community.

Ms. Hendricson stated they are on their way in transforming the Thompsonville area into a safe, fun, walkable, attractive village within Enfield. She noted all over the country people are flocking to authentic, compact places to live. She stated it's known that Enfield already has a gem of a place in Thompsonville with many buildings still standing and natural resources to take advantage of, which gives Enfield a leg up over places that need to be created from scratch.

She stated they tackled the entire invigoration effort from three angles by adding value back physically, socially and economically.

She spoke about getting people to Thompsonville and what people see and experience first on their way into the heart of the downtown area. She spoke about the importance of gateways being inviting and informative in terms of guiding people further downtown. She noted they're continuing to make the entrance attractive through banners, which include special holiday banners and farmers' market banner and special lighting. She stated people can arrive by the Magic Carpet bus service into the downtown area, and bus stops and routes are clearly marked. She pointed out the Magic Carpet bus service celebrated its two-year anniversary on January 14th and welcomed its fifty-thousandth rider.

She noted once visitors arrive downtown, they can park conveniently on the street right in front of the Lamagna Center and community events next to the pond. She stated parking spaces were added to allow easy access for residents and guests. She noted during the farmers' market, vendors had easy off-loading and on-loading, which was an attractive benefit.

She stated municipal lots are now clearly marked providing free, safe and lit parking. She noted they will continue these improvements based upon their parking study, which is now in its final stage.

Ms. Hendricson referred to the benches, picnic tables and planters, which are a welcome permanent addition to the pond area. She noted they will add greenery and seasonal plants year round. She stated Advanced Manufacturing students from the Asnuntuck College are creating trash and recycling cans, and they're taking the granite steps from the old Higgins School and creating mile markers to go around Freshwater Pond.

She noted landscaping is critical downtown with trees, shrubs and flowers, which everyone wants to see.

She stated the fountains in Freshwater Pond were quite well received this summer.

She noted the Police Explorers and other police presence at events provide a safe environment for people.

Ms. Hendricson spoke about downtown development and noted the Town purchased 33 North River Street, and they're in the preparation mode for transforming it into a transit center. She stated they're hoping to bring the Strand Theater back as a vibrant community gathering place.

Ms. Hendricson stated social value is about relationships and engagement and this was accomplished through activities such as community celebrations, i.e., the Falloween Festival, farmers' market, community garden and Pearl Street Library centennial celebration.

She stated this past year, there's been more police presence with walking patrols, bike patrols and higher visibility, enforcement and consistent contact by officers. She noted people have commented about it feeling safer and it's friendly, community-oriented policing. She noted the police are also getting involved in several of the events and celebration. She noted the new fire station increases that positive protection of public safety in Thompsonville.

Ms. Hendricson stated social value is about engagement with residents and businesses. She noted from the business side of things they did several programs – they held a Thompsonville partners event and awards ceremony last spring at the future transit center. She noted they began the Thompsonville talks to encourage engagement among residents and businesses to get involved in the future of Thompsonville. She noted they had over 85 people attend the last Thompsonville talk, and the next talk will take place at the Village Center, 100 High Street in Thompsonville.

She then spoke about economic value and stated her belief the most important factor in increasing value in Thompsonville is to encourage private investments. She noted they've been targeting those investment dollars through several programs. She stated they piloted the Business Information and Technology Incubator at Alcorn, and they look forward to businesses in 2015 taking advantage of the classes that they hold and the technology consultancy through IT staff. She noted this is workplace development for Enfield businesses. She noted they've engaged the commercial real estate industry – the brokers, developers, investors and site selectors to let them know about Enfield's transit-oriented development and their plans in Thompsonville. She stated they brought all these people together this past fall for a commercial and real estate investor breakfast at the Polish Old Country Deli and Banquet Facility in Thompsonville. She noted they provided the guests with a book of all the available properties in Enfield, and they held a panel of successful Enfield businesses to ask them why they located in Enfield and why they decided to grow in Enfield. She pointed out it's important that the commercial real estate industry hears from successful Enfield businesses.

Ms. Hendricson stated they hosted U.S. Representative Joe Courtney, U.S. Senators Chris Murphy and Richard Blumenthal and Governor Malloy in 2014, all of whom expressed support for future transit and overall efforts in Thompsonville.

She stated they recently commissioned an economic impact study on the transit study for Thompsonville and the results show that Enfield has the potential to realize up to 890,000 square feet of new development upon completion of the transit center and the commencement of commuter rail service with an economic impact of 185 jobs, almost \$7 million dollars in new earnings annually and over \$19 million dollars in new sales annually. She read a direct quote from the Executive Summary, "The project would increase annual Town revenues by between \$400,000 and \$1.7 million dollars." She stated the results of this study indicate that there is potential for a significant economic impact. She clarified the Town's ability to capture the economic impact is constrained by current zoning. She noted new zoning changes facilitating transit-oriented development will be required to maximize the economic benefit of the new transit center. She stated the demand will be there, but it's a matter of how pro-active the Town is to allow the type of development that they want and need in Thompsonville.

Ms. Hendricson stated in terms of economic value, programs by the Community Development group continue to help promote private investments through façade programs, housing and building rehab, home ownership incentives and tax incentives.

She stated to keep the momentum going in 2015, they propose an idea for the Village Center at 100 High Street. She noted it has charm, beautiful stain glass windows, heritage and integrity within its historic architecture. She stated they propose its future purpose to be called a Community and Performing Arts Center. She noted this is an exciting project, and they're very proud to present a proposal for transforming this building into a Community and Performing Arts Center. She stated it will be transformed into a destination and a vibrant spot. She noted they want to engage the hearts and minds of the Enfield community and surrounding communities to see and visit this Community and Performing Arts Center. She stated they recently sent out a survey to ask area business leaders what they thought about this kind of venue in Enfield, and they received over 150 responses within the first 24 hours. She noted in total they received almost 200 responses and overwhelming support for this idea, and these were from local business leaders with a variety of titles and positions, i.e., presidents, CEO's, bankers, lawyers, vice-presidents, investors, executive directors, retirees, business owners and others.

Ms. Hendricson shared the questions/responses from a recent survey as follows:

- 1) Do you attend art exhibits or performing arts events? Over 80% responded they often or sometimes attend these kinds of events.
- 2) Would this kind of venue benefit your employee base? 64% responded yes or maybe.
- 3) Would your business or organization consider promoting and/or supporting this kind of venue in Enfield? 67% responded yes or maybe.

She pointed out many people in Enfield and the surrounding area have to travel north or south to partake in cultural events. She noted being the middle ground between the destinations of the Hartford area and Northampton provides a unique opportunity. She stated those people who travel for cultural events typically pass right through Enfield on Route 91 to reach their destination. She noted if these people could cut travel time, avoid traffic and have a variety of dinner options as they could in Enfield, there would be good reason to choose a show or exhibit in Enfield versus going elsewhere.

- 4) What kind of things would you like to see at this type of venue? The responses included live performances, lectures, art gallery space, corporate meetings and educational and satellite campus of a local college or university.

Ms. Hendricson stated after looking at other successful performing arts centers elsewhere, it was learned that such places have membership options, sponsorship options, performing art classes, costume rental shops, renovations funded by public funds from the town and from donations raised by trustees and volunteer help.

She then spoke about the Strand Theater and how it fits into the plan. She noted the Village Center will hold 150 patrons, while the Strand holds almost 750 patrons. She stated the Village Center is a place for small, intimate performances, and the Strand would be able to hold much larger events. She noted other communities such as Northampton and New Haven thrive because of these options, and two options in Thompsonville would really make it a destination and put it on the cultural arts map.

She stated the presence of these two venues will draw people, lower crime rates, bring in dollars, elevate Thompsonville's reputation, enhance desirability for investor funding and bring people back downtown that may have lost faith in it.

Ms. Hendricson stated they need the help and support of the Town Council to make this happen.

Mr. Kennedy stated the Town interviewed three theatrical architects, and each completed a walk-through and provided a scope of services with a conceptual vision for the property. He noted based upon their quotes, experience and vision, they selected Martin Vinik as the architect for this project. He then reviewed a concept for the Village Center at 100 High Street. He stated prior to hiring a theatrical architect, the Town enlisted a structural engineer, and it was determined the building is structurally sound. He noted there are various parking opportunities for patrons with on-site parking in the rear, on-street parking in the High Street area, and shared parking in the Molina plaza or other possible agreements that could be worked out, along with several municipal parking lots in the area.

He stated the examples shown earlier utilized organizational structures such as adopting and utilizing best practices, funding through public-private sources, the use of the Cultural Arts Commission, creating an executive board to oversee the direction of the theater and hiring an executive director who would oversee the day-to-day operations.

As concerns maintenance, he noted the Town could incorporate those duties into current operations.

Ms. Hendricson stated a Performing Arts Center would encompass all three values – physical value, social value and economic value. She noted what is needed from the Town at this point is funding to work on the outside of the building, and they'd like the Council's consensus to move forward. She stated the Council challenged them to come up with a creative idea to keep this facility an asset to the community and to improve upon it.

Councilor Bosco questioned the cost of the study, and Mr. Kennedy responded \$6,000 just for the architectural consultant.

Councilor Bosco stated he was unaware the Town was paying \$6,000 to hire an architect. He questioned the cost for this proposal, and Mr. Kennedy responded between \$3 and \$4 million dollars.

Councilor Bosco questioned spending millions of dollars on 100 High Street and the Strand Theater. He noted there has to be some return for that money, and he doesn't believe the Town will ever get a return for that money. He stated he'd rather see 100 High Street sold. He noted he would not support this idea, and he feels it's a reckless use of taxpayers' money. He stated he doesn't recall authorizing \$6,000 for an architect. He questioned what "maybe" means in the response to the survey. He stated he'd rather hear how many voted "no" and how many voted "yes" because anyone can say "maybe". He questioned if the same answers were used repeatedly for the survey.

Mr. Coppler stated a Councilor can like or hate an idea, but he objects to staff's professionalism or character being assailed.

Councilor Hall stated she didn't know the Town was moving forward with any study on this building and that plans were physically being drawn. She agreed with Councilor Bosco regarding being shocked and surprised that this was done without Council's approval. She noted she is not saying she's for or against because she loves the idea of an arts center in Thompsonville and that this is a great concept. She stated she would definitely gear it toward the Strand and prefers 100 High Street be sold.

Mr. Coppler stated his impression staff was doing what they thought the Council wanted, which was to present a viable alternative for 100 High Street. Councilor Hall responded she was not at a meeting where a majority of this Council said to move forward with drawings and architectural renderings.

Councilor Arnone stated the Town has tried unsuccessfully to unload this building twice for a dollar. He noted he was unaware this building was being looked at this seriously, however, the Town has been talking about doing something with this building. He feels this issue would be better in the hands of the Cultural Arts Commission. He noted the Cultural Arts Commission has a bank account and a way to take private funds. He stated

there was also discussion about the Cultural Arts Commission becoming a 501C so they can receive grant money. He pointed out there is art grant money available.

Councilor Deni stated 100 High Street needs outside work, and Mr. Kennedy stated the cost to paint that building is \$38,000.

Councilor Deni spoke about blight downtown that needs to be addressed, i.e., a burnt house on Church Street, a bakery on Cottage Street, there haven't been walking policemen lately in Thompsonville, the Old North School, etc.

Councilor Szewczak stated the Council gave the Town Manager \$750,000 to do something in Thompsonville. She questioned if the \$6,000 came out of those funds, and Mr. Coppler stated his belief the \$6,000 was taken out of the architectural CIP account.

Councilor Szewczak stated she doesn't want to micromanage Town staff. She noted she doesn't have a problem with staff looking at things. She noted the Town doesn't own the Strand building, therefore, the Town doesn't have any jurisdiction at that location. She stated staff is vetting 100 High Street for this use. She noted she has seen this work at the Cape and in Old Saybrook. She feels the Town has to stop doing the same things it always does, and they need to look at doing other things. She pointed out she drives 45 minutes to go to such venues.

Councilor Mangini thanked staff for thinking out of the box and being creative. She stated her belief an arts venue in Thompsonville would definitely be valuable and appreciated. She questioned what direction staff would like from the Council.

Ms. Hendricson stated immediate next steps would be to request funding in the upcoming budget for the outside of the building and next steps would be around the organization and fundraising.

Mr. Kennedy stated he is not asking the Council to support \$4 million dollars, but only that's the projected cost at the high level architectural renderings that were developed. He noted he didn't say the Town would be spending that much money. He stated there would be a lot of fundraising.

Councilor Mangini stated she would not want the Council to lose control financially, but rather she would want the Council kept informed of happenings and direction. She noted she would not want to stifle staff's endeavors. She feels Ms. Hendricson and Mr. Kennedy are doing a tremendous job for Enfield.

Councilor Edgar stated at Leadership last Wednesday, he raised a question about 100 High Street, and the answer he received from the Town Manager was a cultural arts center, but no further details. He stated he is amazed at what he has heard and seen this evening because he had no idea anything was being done to this degree. He questioned the cost of man hours spent on this so far. As concerns the "yes" and "maybe" responses from the survey, he stated that means nothing to him unless those answers are separated.

He went on to state his impression there was to be a parking study, but he has not seen that. He noted he's unsure about the Strand building because of parking restrictions. He noted they shouldn't consider the parking plaza near Molina's since that plaza is for sale. He feels someone jumped into this idea too quickly without consulting the Council as a whole. He went on to state Thompsonville is his district, and he would like to see it revitalized, but he doesn't feel this idea will do that. He stated he doesn't see any way that he can support this. He questioned if there's been a reach out to the people other than a survey.

Ms. Hendricson stated the parking study is underway now.

Councilor Cekala stated the Council did tell staff to see what could be done in Thompsonville, and that's exactly what they did and she appreciates that. She added staff should have sought a little more authorization. She noted she wants a little more time to digest this. She noted there's the possibility of a very large community center, and possibly a performing arts center could be included in that center, although it wouldn't be in Thompsonville.

Chairman Kaupin thanked staff for the presentation. He stated he wants staff to think outside the box. He noted staff is given latitude with dollars within budget line items. He pointed out they did put a big focus on Thompsonville this year. He feels they need to dial back rhetoric and stop being so harsh. He suggested putting ideas into writing:

- How do such venues self-fund themselves?
- What's the sustainability over the course of time?
- How do these types of centers work in other communities?
- Is this a five-year plan?
- Are they doing the façade to bolster the building, starting activities in the existing building itself and transforming it over a period of time?

He stated if they want Thompsonville to be an economic engine of the Town, they need to do things differently, and they need to make incremental steps along the way. He stated his belief changing zoning codes won't allow ten-story apartment buildings because no one wants that, but there are existing structures where multiple use isn't allowed.

He suggested putting a written presentation together so that the Town Council can digest it.

Councilor Deni stated his belief it's a great idea, but he's shocked about the dollars. He spoke about the need to address blight in Thompsonville.

Councilor Arnone spoke about the need to maintain 100 High Street and stated his belief the Council should give its approval to paint this building. Chairman Kaupin stated that would be part of the budget process.

Councilor Arnone stated the building is already set up for plays, and they should let it happen the way it's currently set up.

Councilor Hall stated her belief the Council should have made the decision as to whether staff should go forward with drawings and renderings. She noted she's not a micromanager, however, the Council are the decision-makers, and she wants to know what staff is thinking before they put money to it.

Councilor Bosco stated he would like to try selling 100 High Street one more time. If this building doesn't sell, the Town has to paint it so it's not blighted. He suggested moving at a slower pace at this time where a minimal amount of money is spent. He went on to state his belief more parking lots need to be placed in different parts of the town. He concluded stating if anything is done, he'd rather see the Strand done. He noted the Town has to do something about the Strand, i.e., foreclosing it. He suggested perhaps an art center could be located in the Strand.

Councilor Szewczak stated since she has been on the Council, the focus is Thompsonville, and other parts of town resent this because they're not being looked at. She noted if they don't solve Thompsonville's problems, they won't do anything for the rest of the Town. She noted they need to give direction to the staff.

Councilor Edgar questioned whether this is a Town thing or is Community Development involved. He questioned what is the Massachusetts casino's impact on this because they will be running art programs as well.

ADJOURNMENT

MOTION #3006 by Councilor Mangini, seconded by Councilor Stokes to adjourn.

Upon a **SHOW-OF-HANDS** vote being taken, the Chair declared **MOTION #3006** adopted 10-0-0, and the meeting stood adjourned at 7:10 p.m.